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An evening of rare silents: Piano score arranged and played by STUART ODERMAN

The Sundown Limited (Pathe-Hal Roach, 1924) Directed by Robert McGowan; 20 mins.

With the Our Gang Kids: Joe Cobb, Mickey Daniels, Mary Kornman, Jackie Condon, Andy Samuels, Allen "Farina" Hoskins, Sonny Warde.

If nothing else, "The Sundown Limited" saves the evening from being totally Biblically dominated. It was the 31st of the highly popular "Our Gang" comedies and one of the best, not least in that its fantasy-come-true story of running one's own railroad transcends the somewhat limited appeal of most of the series, and makes it far more universal. Even if not as easy and practical as it looks, it has a realistic, off-the-cuff look to it, and the fascinating shots of still rural Los Angeles streets are done without back projection or its 20's equivalent, the cyclorama.

THE WANDERER (Paramount, 1925, rel: Feb. '26) Directed by Raoul Walsh; Screenplay by James T. O'Donohue from the 1912 play of the same name by Maurice V. Samuels, and the 1912 German play "The Lost Son" by Wilhelm August Schmidtbonn; Camera, Victor Milner; 75 mins app.

With William Collier jr. (Jether); Greta Nissen (Tisha); Ernest Torrence (Tola); Wallace Beery (Pharis); Tyrone Power sr. (Jesse); Kathlyn Williams (Hulda); Kathryn Hill (Naomi); Georges Regas (Gaal); Holmes Herbert (The Prophet); Snitz Edwards (jeweler); Bynanski Hyman So-Jin (avaricious merchant/trader)

1925 and 1926 were both very good years for Paramount, with some of their very top pictures in release. Of their nearly seventy 1925 productions, "The Wanderer" was hardly one of their best, but it has interest today primarily as a Raoul Walsh film (and his prolific silent career is much too sparsely represented) and as an example of the more economical religious spectacle that Paramount turned to to cash in on the momentum of "The Ten Commandments", even though they had ousted DeMille. For years "The Wanderer" has been virtually unseen. It would not have survived at all had Paramount not decided to release it to the home movie market in a shortened 5-reel form. However, schools and churches were among their foremost customers and Walsh's wild bachannals - resembling Minsky's Burlesque rather more than Babylon - were deemed off-limits for such clientele, and most of that material was cut. But covering all bases, Paramount issued a two-reeler titled "The Feast of Ishtar", promoted as being ideal for smokers, stag party, and similar dubious outlets. Kevin Brownlow in England came up with a good toned print of the five-reel version; I had a good tinted print of the two-reeler (without a stag party outlet at which to exhibit it); and Kevin Brownlow did a magnificent job in intercutting the two and restoring the film to almost its original form, even to duplicating the tints - although the richness of the original toned stock just cannot be duplicated today. It would be nice to be able to say that both Biblical and, more importantly, Walsh scholars will be richly rewarded by Brownlow's industry, but all one can really say - and this is all that was really expected - is that the abstract cause of film history has been well served, and a protection negative now exists. It was never a very good film and still isn't, but it's big and splashy, everybody seems to have had a good time making it - particularly Ernest Torrence, stealing scenes where there is virtually no competition, and Wallace Beery. The final disaster scenes have nice sets and effective though hardly outstanding trick work. Compared with "Ben Hur" or "Noah's Ark" it's tame stuff, but regard it as "The Prodigal" of its day - with Greta Nissen doing more than her share to scorch the screen in the equivalent of the Lane Turner role - and you should find it great fun, if not particularly uplifting in a spiritual sense.

-- TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION --